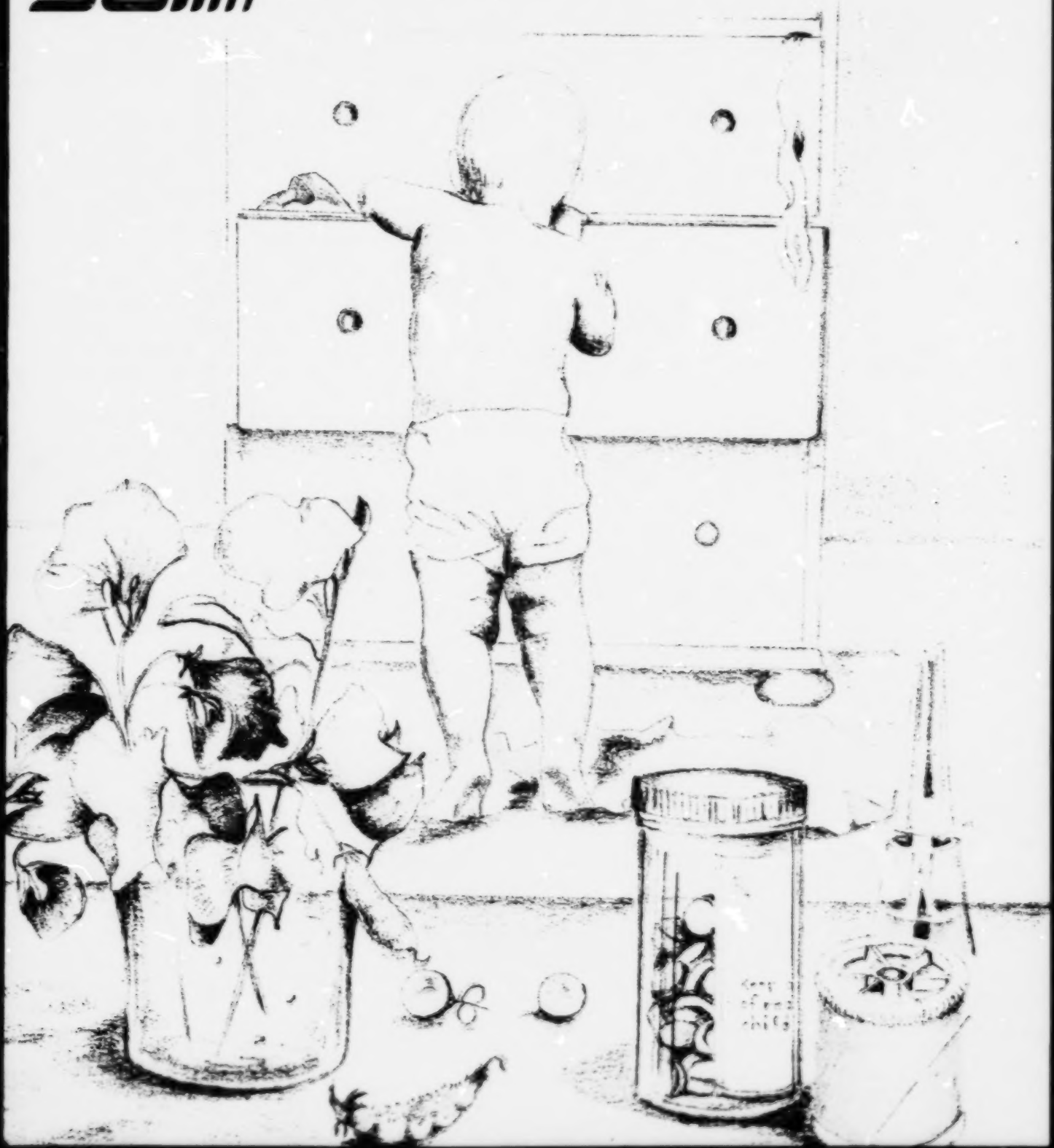
Government of Saskatchewan

Family Foundation

SGIIIII

V. Child Safety: Children Should Be Seen — Not Hurt



INFORMATION

CHILD RESTRAINT

NETWORK

Transport Canada

CAA Saskatchewan

TETHERING YOUR CHILD SAFETY SEAT

Between February and July 1987 all child safety seats previously marketed in Canada as being safe to use without a tether strap were found not to be meeting the federal safety standards. Now, all child safety seats sold in Canada are required to be anchored to the vehicle with a tether strap when used in a forward-facing position.

Tether straps are used to prevent the child safety seat from tipping forward and sideways in a collision or sudden stop. The federal safety standard reguires that, in a 30 mph crash, the child's head must not move forward more than 28 inches. Without a securely anchored tether strap the head tends to go forward further than 28 inches, and the child could be seriously injured.

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What's the Problem?

Accidents account for 55 per cent of the deaths of young people aged 1 to 24. Injuries are the number one threat to the health of Canadian children today. Grim statistics show the toll taken by such offenders as fires, motor vehicles, poisons, household and play equipment. Any one or a combination of faulty products, unsafe usage and unsuitable environment can set the stage for needless injury, suffering and even death.

The only cure for this major health problem is prevention. In England and Sweden, consistent application of **accident prevention measures** has reduced childhood accident rates to half of our rates. For instance, **actively** promoting national seat belt usage has reduced sharply the incidence of serious injury and death in motor vehicles. Setting water heaters at 54°C provides a 30 second safety margin against burns. Effective use of child resistant packaging significantly decreases the poisoning potential of medications.

The solutions for accident prevention are available. In Canada, government, industry and non-governmental agencies co-operate in developing and using safe design standards for children's consumer products such as toys, cribs, playpens, car seats, and sleepwear. Although standards may provide a basic level of protection, no regulation can take the place of wise selection, safe use and regular maintenance. People have to be convinced of the **necessity** of preventative measures. We, as responsible adults, face an awesome task in trying to promote as well as provide safety to our children.

This booklet includes information to help you select and safely use children's equipment and alert you to potential hazardous situations and how to avoid them.

The Aware Consumer's Safety Checklist

Before purchasing or using any child care product, look before you leap. Stop and consider these steps and then choose according to your needs. "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

PRE PURCHASE DECISION MAKING

Gather information about the product to make sure it will serve your purpose.

Make sure the product does what it claims to. **Beware of misleading advertising or inflated claims by the seller.**

BUYING DECISON MAKING

- Examine the product for damage or tampering.
- Check for compliance with standards.
- Use your knowledge of safety rules to check the product for suitability for your child.
- Ask the salesperson for information on the purpose of the product and its proper use.
- Think about the possible hazards through use or misuse of this product.
- **Keep your bill in case of future problems.**

USING

- Read the instructions and warranty carefully before using the equipment.
- Check the labels for hazardous symbols and warnings.
- Read the first aid information on how to handle accidents if they occur.
- Follow instructions for use carefully and teach others when possible how to use the item safely.

MAINTENANCE

- Inspect items periodically for wear or damage.
- Follow manufacturer's instructions for maintenance.
- Repair items as soon as repairs are needed.
- Store items in a safe, appropriate place. Invest in locks and special cupboards for hazardous products.

ACCIDENTS

- Deal with accidents by getting proper treatment.
- Report any problem in writing to the seller and/or manufacturer.
- Report the problem to the appropriate agency (See Booklet I).

DISPOSING

- Check the label for special instructions. If you have questions, call your local sanitation department, pharmacy or other appropriate agency.

Play It Safe

At any one time, there may be over 12,000 different toys on the market. The choices seem endless and bewildering.

Toys sold in Canada should be among the safest in the world. Legislation under the **Hazardous Products Act** establishes toy design criteria which deal with mechanical and electrical hazards, flammability and toxicity levels. Federal Consumer and Corporate Affairs inspectors monitor the marketplace for compliance.

Yet, according to the Canadian Toy Testing Council, "Each year, hundreds of children require medical attention due to injuries from unsafe toys, unsafe play habits and unsafe play environments ... no law can replace parental **responsibility, supervision** and **common sense.**"

All toys are not safe for all children.

Here are a few suggestions for choosing and maintaining playthings.

Proper Selection:

- Keep in mind the child's age, mental development and skill level.
- Use any labelling information as a guide only.
- Look for sturdy toys, consider abuse as well as use.
- If possible, stay away from excessively noisy toys which may damage eardrums.
- With very small children, avoid toys that can be swallowed (these can also block airways and cause choking), have sharp edges, are made of brittle materials or have long cords.

Supervision:

- Take the time to teach your child how to use the toy properly.
- Watch your child play with the toy to determine whether it is safe for him or her.

Storage:

- Set aside a place to store toys.
- Train children to put away toys when play is done. **Small** children should not have access to the toys of older children.
- Check the toy storage boxes for lightweight, ventilated lids and a safe device for holding the lid open so it won't slam on the child's neck or hands. If there is any question, remove the lid.

Maintenance:

- Check toys regularly for potential dangers.
- Damaged toys should be repaired immediately.
- If toys are beyond repair, they should be disposed of, out of sight and reach of children.

If you should purchase or receive a toy which you feel is hazardous, contact the Product Safety Branch, Consumer and Corporate Affairs, Canada. Include such details as name of toy, model, name of manufacturer, date and place of purchase.

You may also wish to forward a copy of your letter to the manufacturer and to the:

Canadian Toy Testing Council *
P.O. Box 6014
Station J
Ottawa, Ontario
K2A 1T1

Telephone: (613) 224-9134

* The Council offers its "seal of approval" at nominal cost to manufacturers of toys receiving the highest rating. This symbol features the mascot, Freckles.

Baby Equipment - Safety First

A good rule to follow for baby equipment purchasing is to look for safety first, baby's comfort second and parents' convenience last. You hear and read about collapsing crib mattress supports, finger-pinching folding strollers, unstable walkers and flammable sleepwear. How do responsible adults decide whether a baby care product is safe?

First of all, do not assume a product is safe because it's on the market. Regulations under the federal **Hazardous Products Act** do provide construction and design standards for cribs, cradles, playpens, strollers, carriages, pacifiers, baby bottles and sleepwear. As well, all infant and child car restraint devices sold in Canada must meet the federal Transport Canada safety standards.

Manufacturers and importers should comply with these standards; however, the government usually does not test these products **before** they reach the market. Consumer and Corporate Affairs Canada buys products once they are on the market to ensure they meet standards, and tests products when they receive complaints.

From time to time, these regulations are reviewed, especially as unforseen hazards are revealed. Since 1984, 13 babies have died in Canada due to faulty **crib** designs. Tougher regulations applying to both new and used cribs were implemented in September, 1986. Any crib which does not conform to the new design standards is considered **unsafe.** Be especially wary of those cribs which use a hazardous support system, involving s-shaped hooks set in ladder-like clips on end panels. The supports could dislodge, causing the mattress to fall and leave a space where a baby could get his/her head jammed and then suffocate. Those more stringent regulations also address hazards such as slat strength and spacing, small parts, and hardware. Cribs and cradles must also carry a permanent warning to guide consumers on safe use of the product.

High Chairs, Baby Walkers and Safety Gates

A number of child care products such as **high chairs, baby walkers** and **safety gates** do not have to meet construction or design standards in Canada. Sharp edges, finger traps and unstable and collapsing frames and trays are only some of the safety flaws found in high chairs. The more than 200 injuries reported to Consumer and Corporate Affairs ranged from superficial bruises to fractures and concussions. If you are looking for a high chair, consider stability — the wider the base, the more stable. Folding high chairs should have a double lock system to guard against collapse.

Attention has also been focussed on some baby walkers and gates as examples of potentially unsafe designs. Most accordian-style gates were voluntarily taken off the market recently after being implicated in the death of 7 U.S. babies and 1 Canadian baby in the last few years. A 3 year study by the Toronto Hospital for Sick Children found that 266 children fell down stairs while using walkers. Two children died from their injuries. The Canadian Medical Association recently adopted a resolution urging the Federal Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs to ban the sale of baby walkers. Legislation is in the offing to

include both baby gates and walkers under the **Hazardous Products Act.** Manufacturers will be required to improve the stability of walkers and decrease the possibility of collapse.

When purchasing a safety gate watch for such hazards as:

- Ease of climbing. Many gates still have accessible long metal bars and large gaps between vertical slats to provide ample hand and toe holds. Such gates are especially dangerous if the young child can reach far enough to trap his/her head.
- Arm/leg entrapment and finger pinching. This can be a scary and sore experience for a youngster.
- Easily unlatched gates. Latches that cannot be reached and require two or more steps to open are safest.
- Easily dislodged gates. Whichever style you choose — pressure mounted or hardware mounted — install it according to the manufacturer's instructions. This is especially important at the top of a staircase. For example, hardware mounted gates need a strong wall stud or wooden doorway frame to hold hinge screws.

Before you think of selling or giving away that "old" crib, think about its potential for killing a child. When going to garage sales to look for second-hand cribs, playpens, strollers, etc. check to make sure they meet regulations.

Keep up-to-date on current safety standards, recalls, warnings and background material. Contact Consumer and Corporate Affairs if you have a complaint or a question. There is a proliferation of baby care equipment on the market. Decide on your essentials, keeping in mind the risks involved. Evaluate whether or not you want to live with these risks. For example, if you decide to put your child in a walker, you must be prepared to constantly supervise your child. Finally, remember that unsafe usage and poor maintenance can nullify the best intention of designers and legislators.

Buckle Up Children Properly Everytime — Car Seats

One of the single most important things you can do to protect your child is to use a child car seat properly on every car trip. Motor vehicle accidents remain a leading cause of death to children under 5. It is estimated that the correct use of children's car seats could reduce fatalities by 90% and injuries by 65%; yet Transport Canada surveys in 1985 show that fewer than a fifth of Saskatchewan children aged 1 to 4 were properly restrained.

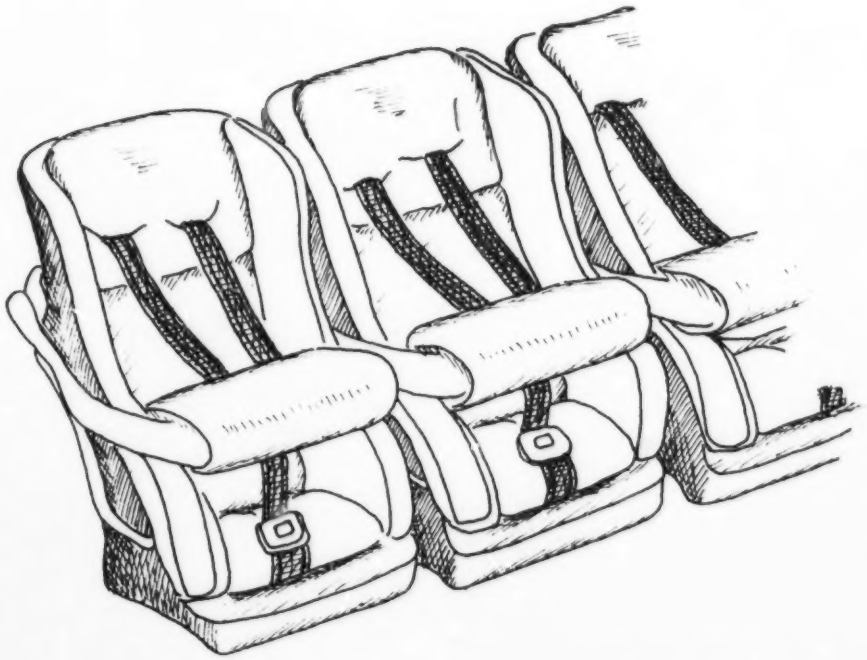
By law in all Canadian provinces, children must be properly restrained when travelling in a motor vehicle. Safety seats sold in Canada must meet Transport Canada's strict safety standards. Any seat manufactured after September 1, 1982 should bear a label stating compliance with Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standards. If you are buying a second-hand seat manufactured before 1982, the label should indicate testing compliance (Consumer and Corporate Affairs) with the term "dynamically tested".

Some child car restraints meet Transport Canada's safety regulations without the use of a top tether strap. However, maximum protection for a child is provided by a car seat which is anchored to the vehicle with a top tether strap. Manufacturers of tetherless restraints either include a tether as standard equipment or make it available on request after purchase of the restraint. Furthermore, several car manufacturers now provide pre-installed tether anchorages in their vehicles.

Since child safety seats do come in different designs, check your child's comfort and your own ease of use before purchasing. Remember you will probably use the seat thousands of times. Install and use it according to manufacturer's instructions.

Heed the Following Precautions:

- Car safety seats should fit firmly in your vehicle.
- Make sure your vehicle seat belt secures the child safety seat properly. Secure the seat even when not in use to prevent it from becoming a lethal "flying object".
- Check that the harness straps are not twisted when your child is in the seat. The width of the straps helps to spread the force of impact.
- Avoid bundling an infant in blankets before putting him/her in the car seat. Place the blanket over the child after doing up the straps.
- If you have to park the car in the sun, cover the seat with a light colored blanket. On return, test the upholstery and metal parts of the safety seat before using to avoid possible burns.
- Check periodically to ensure that the car seat is in good shape. Never use a seat which has been involved in an accident.



Hazardous Situations — Find Them Before Your Child Does

A popular display at safety exhibitions in Sweden features a series of larger-than-life objects designed to show adults how the world appears to a child. Children live in an adult world in which their immaturity makes them very vulnerable to accidental injury. Information, suggestions and checklists are presented in this section to help you to develop an "environmental protection plan" for your child.

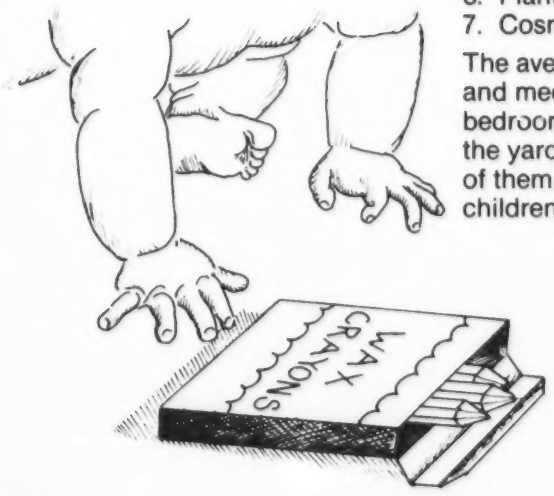
Most accidents can be classified into one of the following seven categories: **poisoning, falls, burns, suffocation, drownings, cuts and other injuries, and electrocutions.**

1. Children Act Fast — So Do Poisons

"A child's world is full of pretty poisons." Many of these poisons have a potentially fatal fascination for curious, imitative and innocent children.

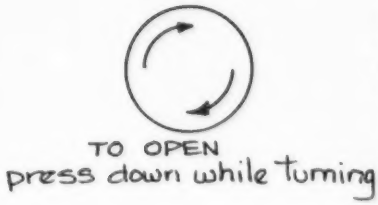
There are about 30,000 instances of poisonings and accidental ingestions of chemicals reported to the Federal Poison Control Program each year. Children under 4 years are the main victims. The principal culprits can be categorized into seven types:

1. Cleaning and bleaching agents
2. Solvents
3. Polishes and waxes
4. Miscellaneous household products and chemicals
5. Drugs and medicines
6. Plants
7. Cosmetic preparations.



The average household has over 250 of these poisons in bathroom and medicine chests, under the kitchen sink, in closets, drawers, on bedroom tables, on basement shelves, in the garage workshop or in the yard. Some of these products are more lethal than others but all of them should be considered potentially hazardous when small children are involved.

Child Resistant Packaging



"Poisonings from drugs and medication are a serious problem. Over 70 per cent of such accidents are to under fives". (Accidental Injuries Report, CAIRE, Act/Nov/85). Child resistant packaging has the potential to be a powerful weapon in the reduction of child poisonings since studies show that safety caps can reduce the number of child poisonings by half.

The **Hazardous Products Act** requires that all household products which contain toxic amounts of petroleum distillates, turpentine, methyl alcohol, pine oils, sulfuric acid, sodium hydroxide and potassium hydroxide be packaged in child resistant containers. Under new regulations as of April, 1986 manufacturers of certain over-the-counter drugs have to provide at least one size with a safety closure. The **Saskatchewan Pharmaceutical Association** has enacted a bylaw which states that, with certain exceptions, prescriptions shall be dispensed in safety closure containers.

In Canada, packages which have been certified child resistant bear the CSA mark and the standard number 276 (The marking appears on the inside (seal) surface of the cap and/or on the inside of the outer cap and the bottom of the vial or bottle.) Although not all manufacturers are obliged to have their products certified, many find that CSA certification does make their product more acceptable to the wise consumer.

When you are able to obtain medication (or other household products) in child resistant packaging, remember to keep it in its safety packaging and reclose properly after use. Check the child resistant properties from time to time. On occasion jammed safety closures have been found on products such as paint thinners and mineral spirits. After absorbing petroleum distillate from the product in the container, the caps can lose their sealing effectiveness. Furthermore, child resistant packaging does not mean that **no** child can gain access to the contents. Remember, the final responsibility rests with parents and guardians to provide for safe storage.

Three Special Cases — Old, New and Planted

Lead poisoning, although infrequent, can be a serious crippler and kiiler of young children. By law, paint for residential use is limited in lead content. This also applies to any toy or article coated with paint and intended for use by children. However, one of the most common sources of lead poisoning is the peeling and chipped lead paint found on windowsills, doors and walls of older homes. Children chewing on painted surfaces or paint chips may ingest enough lead to cause lead poisoning. Sometimes no symptoms are evident until poisoning is severe. Careful cleaning and maintenance of lead painted homes is a necessity. As well, avoid using paint with lead in it when making homemade toys and furniture

Each year consumers accidentally swallow (estimated 500 to 800 cases in U.S.) tiny **button batteries** used to power watches, calculators, cameras, hearing aids and games. In most cases, the battery passes through the body without any problem. Occasionally, a battery may lodge in the esophagus or intestine, slowly leaking alkaline electrolytes, causing severe internal burns and even death. To a large extent battery ingestion is preventable. Never allow young children to play with button batteries or with products containing them. Dispose of used batteries so they cannot be retrieved by a curious child. Older children should be cautioned never to "hold" button batteries in their mouths or mistake them for pills. If a button battery is swallowed, **do not** induce vomiting. Contact your local Poison Control Centre and your doctor.

Poisonous plants are found everywhere, possibly even in your own home. For children, a small dose of small plants can be fatal. One child died after eating the berries from a Christmas mistletoe. Another was fatally poisoned after drinking the water from a vase of Lily of the Valley flowers. Any part of a plant can be toxic — leaves, roots, bulb, bark, fruit, seeds, pods or fruit-pits.

Become familiar with the poisonous plants common to your area. Take an inventory of plants you have. If you must keep the poisonous ones, locate them out of reach of small children. Teach youngsters to keep all plant parts out of their mouths. Try to acquaint your children with toxic plants; make the risks clear to them.

Poison-proof your home. You never know when a child may come along.

Check these places to see if potentially poisonous products are stored safely, preferably locked, out of reach of children.

____ Bathroom	____ Dining Area	____ Workshop
____ Bedrooms	____ Basement	____ Tool Shed
____ Kitchen	____ Garage	____ Closets
____ Living Room	____ Yard	____ Special Storage Places
____ Medicine Cabinet		

Look especially for these hazardous substances:

- Kerosene and gasoline
- Lye
- Soaps and detergents
- Polishes and cleaning powders
- Ant and rat poison
- Aspirin and other medicines, including vitamins
- Paint remover and turpentine
- All kinds of sprays
- Fertilizer and weed killers
- Toilet bowl and drain cleaners
- Disinfectants and deodorants
- Moth balls and pesticides.

Where Do You Store?

Some Potentially Dangerous Household Poisons.

CLEANING, BLEACHING AGENTS
Metal cleaners and polishers
Detergents
Ethylene glycol
Dry cleaning fluids
Amyl acetate
Benzine
Carbon tetrachloride
Ammonia
Copper and brass cleaner
Turpentine
Cleaning liquids
Alcohol
Oxalic acid
Kerosene
Methyl alcohol
Naphtha
Petroleum distillates
Window washing fluid
Drain cleaners
Typewriter cleaner
Gun cleaners
Lighter fluid
Bleach

SOLVENTS
Paint remover
Wax remover
Grease spot remover
Lacquer remover
Nail polish remover
Paint thinner
Carbon tetrachloride
Kerosene
Methyl alcohol
Methanol
Turpentine
Lighter fluid
Petroleum products

POLISHES AND WAXES
Nail polish
Furniture wax/polish
Car wax
Kerosene
Silver polish
Pine oil
Mineral oil
Turpentine
Naphtha
Paint

MISCELLANEOUS HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS AND CHEMICALS
Epoxy glue
Model cement
Garden sprays
Insecticides
Pesticides
Strychnine
Herbicides
Rat killers
Wax crayons
Inks
Fire extinguishing fluids
Rug adhesive
Rodenticides
Antifreeze
Carburetor cleaners
Gasoline
Antirust products
Deodorizing tablets
Plant food
Leather polishes and dyes
Shoe cleaners and polishes
Jewellery cleaners and cements
Laundry blueing

COSMETIC PREPARATIONS
Nail polish remover
Dandruff shampoo
Eye make-up
Nail polish
Corn and wart remover
After shave
Shaving lotions/creams
Hair lotions
Suntan lotions
Resins
Cuticle removers
Cologne
Permanent-wave solution
Bubble bath
Hair dyes/tints
Hair remover
Neutralizers
Lacquers
Skin preparations
Plasticizers
Hair sprays
Perfume

DRUGS AND MEDICINES
Narcotics
Antiseptics
Vitamins
A.S.A.
Iron medicines
Pain killers
Clinitest tablets
Rubbing alcohol
Corn and wart remover
Iodine
Tranquilizers
Birth control pills
Laxatives
Children's fever drops
Cough syrup

(Most of the items in this cateory are only poisonous when taken orally by accident or in excess.)

PLANTS IN WOODS AND FIELDS
Wild and cultivated cherries
Jack in the pulpit
Moonseed
Mayapple
Jimson weed (thorn apple)
Buttercup
Nightshade
Poison hemlock

HOUSE PLANTS
Hyacinth
Narcissus
Daffodil
Oleander
Arnica
Philodendron
Dieffenbachia
Calla lily
Dumbcane
Elephant's ear
Rosemary pea
Castor bean
Mistletoe
Poinsettia

ORNAMENTAL PLANTS AND TREES
Daphne
Wisteria
Golden chain
Laurels
Rhododendron
Black locust
Elderberry
Azaleas
Jessamine
Lanta camera (red sage)
Yew
Oaks

FLOWER AND VEGETABLE GARDEN PLANTS
Larkspur
Monkshood
Autumn crocus
Star of Bethlehem
Lily of the valley
Daffodil
Nutmeg
Sweet pea
Iris
Foxglove
Bleeding heart
Rhubarb leaves
Indian tobacco
Jonquil
Oleander

Health & Welfare Canada
1982

Case Studies

Cases for Discussion

1. An 18 month old boy died after drinking floor cleaner containing petroleum distillates. His father had left the room for only an instant.
2. A 1 year old girl spent 8 days in hospital after swallowing charcoal lighter fluid from a can left in the yard after a family picnic.
3. A 25 month old boy suffered cardiac arrest five days after swallowing a small button battery which caught in his throat, leaked corrosive chemicals and caused a hole between his trachea and esophagus. The child lived but had to have extensive surgery.
4. A 3½ year old boy sustained permanent damage to his gastrointestinal tract and liver from an overdose of children's vitamin mineral supplements containing iron. He thought the colorful animal-shaped pills were candy which his mother had hidden behind a plate on the top shelf of a cupboard.
5. A 3 year old girl died 3 hours after drinking 1/3 cup of kerosene, some of which had entered her lungs. The child and her younger sister had been playing alone in their grandparents' kitchen where a cup had been placed to catch kerosene leaking from a faulty stove connection.

Discussion Questions

1. Was this hazard inherent in the product, or was it caused by misuse or abuse of the product?
2. What were the responsibilities of the consumer in this situation?
3. What is the responsibility of the manufacturer or retailer in this situation?
4. Does a government agency have any responsibility in this situation?
5. How could this problem be prevented in the future?

Some Possible Answers

1. The problem was created by the adults using and storing poisonous products in an unsafe manner.
2. Some common household products are so hazardous that parents and other adults should make exceptional efforts to keep them out of reach of children. Although it's next to impossible to watch a child every minute, one should do just that in a store where potentially hazardous "pretty" poisons are sold.
3. The manufacturer had the responsibility of clearly labelling the products so the adults could know to take the proper precautions. Adequate warnings help to remind consumers. The retailer could make an effort to keep extremely corrosive products on higher shelves.

4. Consumer & Corporate Affairs enforces the labelling of hazardous products.
5. Increased consumer education might help to prevent such problems by alerting consumers to the dangers.

2. Falls

Accidental falls are very frequent among children. Although many of the resulting injuries are minor, the serious and occasional fatal ones underline the importance of prevention. Head injuries, especially in the first few months of life, can cause permanent brain damage.

Most falls of small children (0 to 4 years) are on stairs and from furniture. It is estimated that 50 per cent of babies fall from high surfaces at least once before they are a year old. Five to 14 year olds appear to have more falls from playground equipment and in recreational activities.

How can you protect children from disabling falls? First of all, create as safe an environment as possible with safety oriented design of stairs and steps, furniture, doors, windows, play areas, etc. Use safety restraints, guards, latches, gates and locks as much as possible for babies and toddlers. Know the developmental milestones of children so you can keep one step ahead of them. For instance, at three months of age, it's no longer safe to leave a baby in an infant seat since he/she may be able to wriggle the apparatus to the edge of the table or flat surface. Finally no amount of good safety designs and precautions can take the place of **close attention** to small children anywhere there is a hazard from falling.

3. Burns, Scalds

Scalding with hot liquids ranks as the most frequent cause of burns, with children under 5 most at risk. Many of these severe scalds could be prevented by turning down the water heater temperature. At 60° C (140° F) third degree burns may occur after 6 seconds of exposure. A reduction of the water temperature to 54° C (130° F) gives a 30 second margin before a third degree burn occurs.

Every year in Canada an average of 20 children up to nine years of age suffer serious burn injuries as a result of their **sleepwear** catching fire. Loose flowing garments made of cotton, linen, rayon, cellulose, acetate, acrylics and their blends in lightweight, open weave or pile fabrics pose the greatest risk. Tougher flammability regulations under the **Hazardous Products Act** for children's nightgowns, robes, baby-doll and tailored pyjamas will come into effect September 30, 1987.

Only those garments made of fabrics that tend to self-extinguish after being held vertically over an open flame (nylon, polyester, modoacrylics and wool) will pass the test. If you sew your children's garments, keep in mind that fibre, type of fabric and construction are all crucial for sleepwear fire safety. Sleepwear with snug fitting sleeves, legs and waists are safer, especially if you must use cotton (eg. allergic child).

Reduce the chances of your child receiving a severe burn:

- Keep matches, lighters, hot beverages and flammable liquids such as gas and kerosene out of reach of children.
- Keep children away from heat-producing appliances and open flames.
- Place guards and safety barriers around stoves, heaters and fireplaces.
- Keep a close watch on the use of hot water. Water can still scald ½ hour after boiling.
- Test bath water before the child is put in it.
- Make sure everyone knows what to do if clothing catches on fire. STOP, DROP AND ROLL to smother the flames.

As a final precaution — don't leave children unsupervised — even for a short time. Fire can spread quickly, sometimes making rescue impossible in a very short time.

4. Choking — Suffocation

From time to time autopsy reports indicate accidental and tragic children's deaths by asphyxiation — lack of oxygen to the lungs. The culprits, for the most part are such household products as **cribs, waterbeds, discarded fridges** and **freezers, plastic bags, toys, pacifiers,** pull **cords on blinds** and **draperies.**

Following a number of fatalities due to the **malfunction of crib mattress support systems,** new regulations under the **Hazardous Products Act** are now directed at eliminating suffocation risks due to structural collapse. Any crib which does not conform to the new design standards is considered unsafe. Furthermore, a permanent warning will be required to be affixed to the crib to guide consumers on safe use of the product.

The issue has been raised of suffocation hazards to babies by adult **waterbeds.** Five Canadian babies have died on waterbeds in similar circumstances in the last 2 years. Until more research is done in this area, a safe course would be to not put infants to sleep on waterbeds. Doctors recommend that babies have a firm surface for sleeping. Their softer nose bone structure increases the risk of suffocation in the prone position on a flexible, impervious surface.

Another hazardous situation exists when curious youngsters become trapped in old, **discarded refrigerators.** Most refrigeration devices now close magnetically, making the doors easier to open from inside. However, many older units have roller-locking mechanisms which cannot be opened from inside. **The Abandoned Refrigerator Act** in Saskatchewan requires that doors be removed from discarded refrigerators, ice boxes and freezers.

People who carefully keep small objects such as marbles, coins, buttons, etc. out of children's reach, may forget to exercise similar caution in choosing their **children's food.** The danger of food asphyxiation is as great as that of deaths due to poison. A study by the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore found that hotdogs were the food item that 1 and 2 year olds choked on most often. Hard

candy, peanuts, gum, grapes, apples, raw carrots, cookies, meats, apples, popcorn, seeds and peanut butter were also high on the list. Foods requiring a great deal of chewing should not be given to children until they have a full set of teeth. Eating is safest when children are sitting upright quietly and are supervised.

Although a **pacifier** may soothe a jumpy colicky baby, it is considered potentially dangerous enough to be regulated under the **Hazardous Products Act.** These regulations help to prevent most hazards such as breaking down of pacifiers, being inserted too far into the child's mouth, problems with cords and toxicity. However, parents should check the condition of their child's pacifier regularly. For instance, pacifier nipples can deteriorate with use.

Although we don't usually consider **window blinds** and **draperies** as being dangerous, they can be if children become entangled in the cords. Remember that cribs and furniture give children extra height to reach the cords.

To reduce hazards from suffocation or choking:

- Never use airtight, thin plastic in cribs or carriages. It can suffocate a child in less than a minute. Knot plastic bags before disposal.
- No pillow or restraining device should be used in a baby's crib.
- Elevate an infant's head for feeding. It is dangerous to leave a bottle of milk or juice propped in the crib for feeding.
- Check for small items like buttons, erasers and coins which can be large enough to lodge in the throat.
- Watch for narrow openings such as safety gates where heads or necks can be caught.
- Don't have cords, ribbons, strings around cribs or playpens where the child can become entangled.

Case Study

A 7 month old baby died when his crib's mattress support collapsed. At the inquest, a Coroner's jury recommended that all possible means including warnings from manufacturers, retailers, physicians, public health units and on family allowance cheques be used to alert parents to crib hazards. The jury also adopted two recommendations which the child's parents had put forward: that buyers be registered through warranty cards kept on file for 10 years and that manufacturers be forced to advertise the hazard at their own expense.

5. Drowning

Again, the key word here is **supervision.** Anytime children and water are put together you have a potential hazard. Children can drown in as little as 4 cm (1.6 in.) of water.

Another sensible and effective precaution against drowning accidents is to make sure your children know how to swim at an early age and learn about water safety. Toddlers and infants who have not been taught to swim should wear life jackets or approved personal flotation devices near pools or bodies of water.

Some further accident prevention how to's:

- Never leave a small child unattended near water. When bathing an infant, either ignore all interruptions or take the child with you.
- Pools should be fenced properly and protected with child-proof locks.
- Protective covers for hot tubs and permanent wading pools are important. Remember the pull of suction units tends to hold small children, sometimes with disastrous results.
- Empty all portable wading pools after use.
- Be aware that toilet bowls pose a drowning hazard to young children.
- Since most clothes washers cannot be opened from inside, a child could be trapped.
- Beware of the danger of thin ice on bodies of water during early fall and spring seasons.

Case Study

A youngster, 19 months old, drowned in a hot tub. The boy was used to playing in the hot tub located within the house as long as he used inflated water wings. At the time of the accident the hot tub was uncovered and both parents were in the kitchen. Because they had lost contact with him for a few minutes, the father became concerned and found the child lying unconscious in the hot tub.

The Coroner's recommendations were as follows:

1. Parents who purchase hot tubs (spas) be warned of the dangers that these tubs pose to young children who are unable to swim.
2. The manufacturers of hot tubs be required to affix an appropriate warning label to all hot tubs.
3. That a hard cover be over the tub at all times when not in use.

6. Cuts and Other Injuries

Glass is one of the chief offenders in this area. Potentially dangerous sections of glass, especially in the lower part of a door or a low window, should be fitted with safety glass. Special plastic film to cover the glass makes it safer also. At the very least, decal or tape placed at child and eye level may help to prevent walk through.

Knives, scissors and other **sharp tools** present other sources of serious injury to children. Orderly habits of putting away and in some cases locking equipment pave the way to safety. As the child gets older, she/he should be taught how to use sharp tools, keeping in mind that supervision may still be necessary. Children's play equipment needs to be checked for scissor-like mechanisms that can crush fingers and exposed screws, bolts or fasteners with sharp edges or points.

Automatic garage door openers pose another source of potential injury to children who find a garage door an attractive "toy". Accidents have occurred when the descending door has struck a

child, often pinning the victim to the ground — even in situations where garage doors were equipped with an automatic reverse safety feature. A wise precaution would be to lock remote controls in the glove compartment and relocate wall-mounted switches.

A few reminders:

- Older children must walk, not run when carrying sharp pointed objects. Young children should not have them at all.
- Don't let toddlers walk around holding anything made of breakable glass. Their footing is too insecure.
- If your child wears glasses, try to get splinter-proof or plastic lenses.
- Install child-resistant catches on kitchen and medicine cabinets.
- Periodically check and, if necessary, adjust the garage door's reverse safety feature mechanism.
- If there is a glass enclosure in your bathroom, it should be of safety glass.
- Check for free falling lids on toy chests which can drop on a child's limbs or neck.

7. Electrocutions

Water and electricity can be a deadly combination. Electrocutions can result from misuse of **electrical appliances** especially in the bathroom or kitchen. Never allow a child to touch an appliance with wet hands, while in the bathtub or while standing on a damp floor. Deaths have occurred because electric power was still running into an appliance even though the switch was turned off.

With small crawling children who put all things in their mouth, one should be very careful with plugged-in **extension cords.** There have been cases of severe electrical mouth burns suffered after biting a "live" electric cord. The busy Christmas season with its tree lights is a high risk time for such occurrences.

Consider installing **ground-fault circuit interrupters** anywhere that electricity can come in contact with water. In Saskatchewan the **Canadian Electrical Code** requires their use (in new construction and installations) in outside outlets, spas and whirlpool baths and in bathrooms.

Some points to remember:

- Always disconnect small electrical appliances after using them especially ones used anywhere near water.
- Don't let children play with outlets, lamps or appliances and extension cords.
- Protect unused outlets with nylon or plastic safety caps or block access with furniture.
- If possible for outside outlets use a master switch your child can't reach.
- Always unplug extension cords at the wall socket.
- Never leave an electrical appliance within reach of small children.

Playgrounds — Safe Fun

A playground can be an exciting place for children with different types of "toys" to play with. While it's important not to dampen this spontaneous enthusiasm for physical activity and discovery, the frequency of injuries on playgrounds is alarming. In 1981 at the Toronto Hospital for Sick Children there were 407 children hurt in falls from playground equipment — 52 of those were admitted to hospital. Falls account for 65% of the injuries. Many of these injuries could have been prevented by more attention to design, installation and maintenance of play space and equipment.

A few basic considerations:*

- Look for smoothly finished equipment with no protrusions or sharp edges to cause injury to children — Eg. no open-ended-S-hooks.
- Equipment should be in scale to size of young children, especially swings, slides and seesaws.
- Equipment should be placed on a surface with a good shock absorbing quality — ie. sand (25 cm), pea gravel (30 cm), pine bark (30 cm), or rubber matting (6 cm) in a sufficiently thick layer.
- Look for slides with wide, deep steps and not too steep an incline.
- Swing seats of light weight material are preferable.
- Check for moving parts, especially on gliders and seesaws which can pinch or crush fingers.
- Check for head entrapment on such devices as swinging exercise rings. Rings having a diameter of between 13-25 cm. (5-10 in.) can be hazardous.
- Look for sturdy, well constructed equipment. There are no standards at the present time in Canada to help you choose although a new standard is being prepared by a Technical Committee at C.S.A.

Concerning Home Made Equipment

Creosote treated wood is not recommended for use as playground equipment. Creosote could transfer onto hands and clothing.

Installation and Maintenance

- Stability of equipment is important. Make sure all anchoring devices are set well below ground level to prevent tipping.
- Place playground sets at least six feet from walls, fences and other play equipment.
- Check frequently (at least twice a month during heavy usage) to make sure all nuts, bolts and clamps are tight.
- Check, repair or replace all rusted areas if necessary.

Instruct children on how to use the equipment safely — no rough play such as shoving — no walking in front of moving swings.
Continue to supervise young children when they use playground equipment.

* More details in "Hidden Hazards on Playgrounds for Young Children" — Health & Welfare Canada, 1984.

Child Safety Quizzes

A. Can You Answer "Yes"?

Did you check your baby care equipment for:

1. _____ sturdy construction and secure locking devices to guard against collapse?
2. _____ sharp edges, rough surfaces and potential head and finger traps?
3. _____ labels indicating, if applicable, compliance with the **Hazardous Products Act**?
4. _____ adequate assembly and maintenance instructions?

Do you:

5. _____ use restraining straps in a high chair or stroller?
6. _____ inspect equipment regularly in order to correct unsafe conditions caused by normal wear and tear?
7. _____ always watch a child in a stroller, carriage, high chair, carrier, walker, playpen, jolly jumper, changing table, and so on?
8. _____ always buckle up your child in the car restraint suitable for the vehicle, child's age and size?
9. _____ buy toys keeping in mind the child's age, mental development and skill level?
10. _____ check your children's toys for sharp edges, brittle materials, broken parts?
11. _____ know where to complain if you choose or receive a toy you feel is dangerous?
12. _____ always read and heed the warning labels on hazardous products?
13. _____ keep all products in original containers with labels and instructions intact?
14. _____ use child resistant packaging when available?
15. _____ always exercise care using a hazardous product, keeping it out of a child's reach, taking the child with you when interrupted?
16. _____ supervise your children closely in stores, other homes, etc. when harmful products are accessible?
17. _____ train your children to leave household products, plants and drugs alone and stay out of storage areas.

18. _____ always return poisonous substances to safe storage immediately?

19. _____ always keep food, medicines and hazardous substances separated?

20. _____ promptly dispose of old or unused products safely?

21. _____ avoid taking medicine in front of children or calling medicine candy?

22. _____ know basic first aid and have the phone number of your poison control centre, hospital emergency and your doctor handy?

23. _____ have safety gates at top and bottom of stairs if you have a small child?

24. _____ check your walking surfaces for non slippage and no obstructions?

25. _____ ensure that furniture, windows, doors, etc. are child proofed?

26. _____ check backyard and/or playground swings, slides, merry-go-rounds, monkey bars, seesaws, etc. for loose bolts, clamps and anchorage.

27. _____ check your child's playground safety habits?

28. _____ check septic tank covers to ensure that they are on tight?

Scoring:

This is a tough one! To help keep your children safe you should score 100%

B. Test Your Knowledge about the Proper Use of Children's Car Seats

1. T or F By law, all children under 40 lbs. (18 kgs.) must be restrained in a child car seat.
2. T or F Children aged 2 to 4 can use approved booster seats for car travel.
3. T or F All car seats sold in Canada must be attached with a tether strap as well as a seat belt.
4. T or F When a child is able to sit up, the infant carrier should be used facing the front of the car.
5. T or F If no child car seat is available, it is better to use an adult lap belt than to hold a child in a passenger's arms.

Answers:

1. **True.** And, the seats must be used properly to give full protection.
2. **False.** Booster seats are **not** an adequate substitute for car seats. For children **over 40 lbs.** a booster seat helps position a lap belt over the pelvis. Use car seats as long as possible — usually through age 5.
3. **False.** Transport Canada standards permit car seats without tether straps. Both tethered and tetherless seats are on the market, and parents must follow manufacturer's directions carefully.
4. **False.** The infant carrier (three point harness) must **always** be used facing the rear. Convertible seats may be used front facing for the child weighing 20-40 lbs. (9-18 kg.) These have a five-point harness.
5. **True.** Holding a child is dangerous, and an ordinary seat belt provides adequate protection in many cases.

C. Match the consumer products with the injuries

(More than one product may be associated with an injury and vice versa).

cuts_____
fractures_____
burns_____
sprains_____
poisonings_____
bruises_____
drownings_____
electric shocks_____

1. drain cleaners, furniture polishes
2. matches, ovens and ranges
3. toys
4. skates, skateboards
5. swimming pools
6. stairs, porches
7. playground equipment
8. extension cords
9. lawn mowers, hedge trimmers
10. football and baseball equipment

Answers on next page.

Answers:

cuts	**3,4,5,6,7,9,10**
sprains and fractures	**3,4,5,6,7,10**
burns	**1,2,8**
poisonings	**1,2,5**
bruises	**1,2,3,4,5,6,7,9,10**
drownings	**5**
electric shocks	**2,3,8,9**

D. Spotting Safety Hazards

The following items are among those identified by the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission through its report of products frequently involved in accidents which result in injury. How would you rank them? From 1 — most likely to injure, to 10 — least likely to injure.

_____ Bicycles
_____ Stairs
_____ Non-glass doors
_____ Cleaning agents
_____ Beds
_____ Football and equipment
_____ Playground equipment
_____ Liquid fuels, gasoline, etc.
_____ Architectural glass

Answers:

Actually, they're listed in order, just as they appear on the Commission's survey. Bicycles are the items most frequently associated with injury, with the other products following in rank order.

Notice anything? May of the items consumers believe to be hazardous such as matches, knives, space heaters and ladders, are not among those products most often associated with injury. It could be because people recognize their potential danger and use them cautiously.